Information Services Board Briefing Paper on the Community and Technical Colleges Re-hosting of Administrative Systems Project

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Description

The community and technical colleges, through their administrative computing consortium, the Center for Information Services (CIS), are seeking approval to select a vendor to re-host their administrative applications. This request is consistent with the plan that was presented to the ISB in September 2001 when the colleges outlined their interest in migrating their legacy administrative applications that currently run on the Hewlett Packard (HP) 3000 platform. Hewlett Packard has since informed HP3000 users that it will discontinue support for the series effective in 2006.

The plan calls for the colleges to move the legacy business logic and data to a modern platform and re-model the data to a modern database while maintaining the extensive functionality of the current applications. The plan outlined for the ISB was a three-step approach:

1. Select consultants to analyze requirements, identify architectural solutions and make recommendations, and develop the feasibility study;
2. Select an implementation vendor and conduct proof of concept to prove vendor's capabilities; and
3. Implement re-hosting: applications conversion, remodeling the data, and implementation.

The plan included seeking Information Services Board (ISB) approval between steps 1 and 2.

The vendor selected to perform step 1 is CACI International Inc., headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. CACI has 5,500 employees worldwide and fiscal year 2002 revenues in excess of $680 million. CACI has extensive experience in re-hosting and large system integration projects.

CACI recommends performing the implementation in two phases. The first phase requires two years and would provide reengineering of the data into relational databases and re-hosting of the applications used by the 34 colleges. Phase two requires three years to re-engineer the applications and rewrite the COBOL applications. The total cost is estimated at $18-21 million.

Background

The legacy administrative applications currently used by the colleges were developed by CIS and implemented on HP3000s in the mid-1980s. The applications, which include Financial Aid, Financial Management, Human Resources, and Student Management, have been extensively customized and integrated with several third-party products. While the legacy applications are feature-rich, the data design and user tools do not adequately support the colleges needs today.

CIS has researched replacement alternatives for the legacy applications, including in-house redevelopment and purchase of a third party ERP solution, none of which has proved viable. In 1998 under an Information Services Board (ISB) approved RFP acquisition plan, the CIS selected PeopleSoft as the apparent successful vendor. A formal fit-gap analysis was performed to determine the modifications and expense of the PeopleSoft product to meet the colleges' needs.

Among the conclusions of the fit-gap analyses were:

- Washington's system of rules, regulations, and business requirements did not fit the "plain vanilla" versions of the PeopleSoft application;
- The fit-gap process showed that the PeopleSoft higher education application was not mature enough for a large college system;
- Only a few single-campus colleges have implemented the full PeopleSoft suite; and
- PeopleSoft could not meet the colleges' needs with the funds available. The acquisition and implementation costs were estimated at $42 million. Incremental annual costs ranged from $4.0 to $5.4 million.

Status
In March 2001 the CIS issued a Request for Information (RFI) to determine if re-hosting would be a feasible alternative to replacing the administrative applications. The vendor responses showed that many businesses are choosing the re-hosting alternative instead of replacing their legacy applications. Following the findings of the RFI, the college presidents approved moving forward with development of a re-hosting project plan. The plan has 3 phases:

- Business case analysis and plan development;
- Proof of concept; and
- Re-hosting implementation.

During the past year, goals for the project were outlined and an experienced consultant was retained to gather information, identify the business case, identify architectural alternative solutions and make recommendations, and complete a feasibility study. Taking the project goals, risks, and costs into consideration, the community and technical college presidents' CIS Executive Committee adopted the following:

1. That the project be conducted in 2 phases as described in CACI's technical recommendation.
2. That the computing architecture be centralized and that a remote disaster recovery/business resumption capability be established. The architecture will be centralized for all colleges until Phase 1 is complete.
3. That the RFP be written following CACI's technical recommendations, but would allow other alternatives provided they meet the standards in CACI's recommendations.

Issues
The current risks and challenges

- Funding could become an issue if bid proposals exceed project cost estimates.
- New technology will require new learning and changes at the CIS and at the campuses. Staff time to learn the new technology has been built into the project estimate.
- What will be the implementation plans for 34 colleges? Will the roll-out be a 'big bang' with all applications at the same time at each campus? Or will it be by application? What will be the sequence of implementation at the 34 colleges?

Recommendation
DIS recommends ISB approval of the request from the community colleges to release an RFP for implementation services to perform administrative system software and data re-hosting. This project will be under formal ISB oversight.